

## HISTORICAL DIPTEROLOGY

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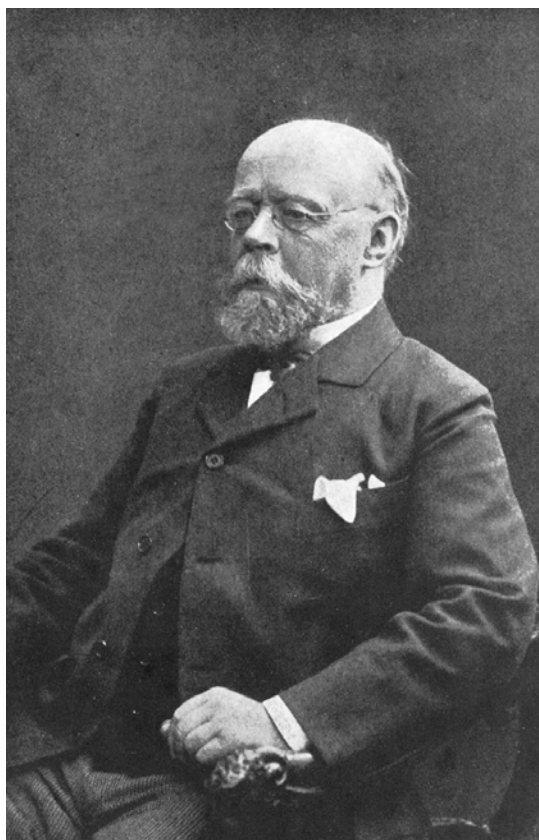
### Notes toward a biography of the “little-known” Karl Robert Osten Sacken (1828–1906)

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I enjoy writing about some of the lesser-known or neglected dipterists but also enjoy finding little-known facts about some of our better-known colleagues. To discover that Osten Sacken was diminutive in size and called “mosquito” by his colleagues; or that he had the rare mnemonic ability called synesthesia (seeing numbers as colors); or that (having never been married) he had a special interest in a South Carolinian female painter during his “retired” years in Europe, got me hooked into finding out a bit more of this intriguing diplomat/entomologist. The notes below are rather scattered but hopefully can be later quilted into a fuller biography of the life and times of one of our most famous dipterists.

One of the greatest North American dipterists, sometimes known as the “Father of American dipterology” (he light-heartedly referred to himself as the “Grandfather of American dipterology” in his autobiography) and the subject of this biographical study, Osten Sacken was born in St. Petersburg, Russia on 21 August 1828 (9 August in the Julian calendar used at the time), the oldest of eight children (five sisters and two brothers; only three of whom survived childhood). As one of the leading dipterists of his time and one of the best known of those who specialized in the North American fly fauna, one might think the title of this paper a bit odd. True enough, Osten Sacken’s life as an entomologist is very well known, especially so through his autobiography (Osten Sacken, 1903) the review of his work by Alexander (1969), and further biographical details researched by Smith (1978). However, his life aside from entomology is less known, and that is the primary focus of this written portrait, although some entomological activities are included to put things into a temporal context.



#### Family Heritage

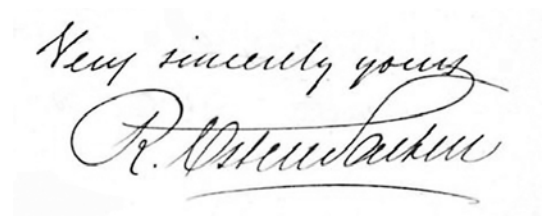
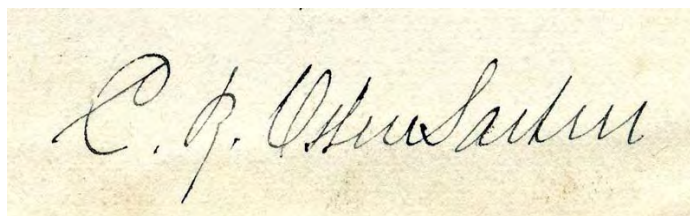
Osten Sacken was born of a noble heritage. His family can be traced back to Austria in the 1200s, a lineage whose people emigrated to Kurland in Latvia where one of his ancestors, Arnold von der Osten auf Plathe (1335–1393) was a member of the Knights of Livonia, who conquered Kurland in the 1200s and carved out a Catholic state. The various lineages of the Osten Sacken family contain some interesting descendants and family connections including Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Count Bismarck of Germany, and the writer Lev “Leo” Tolstoy (the last was father-in-law to an Osten

Sacken). Around 1555, some of Osten Sacken's ancestors emigrated from Livonia to the island of Øsel (now part of Estonia) where they established a large estate called Randavere [Randefer]. The estate remained in the Osten Sacken family and Robert was a Trustee of the estate from 1873 until his death. It is still there today.

Osten Sacken's father, the Baron Roman [Reinhold] Fedorovich Osten Sacken [Роман Федорович Остен Сакен] (1791–1864) was, during the Russo-Turkish war of 1828–1829, the Russian State Councilor in the Foreign Ministry, and conducted all matters relating to trade, border issues, solutions, cartel agreements, and questions about the fate of Poland, residing at the headquarters of His Imperial Majesty, Czar Nicholas I. [He was thus not in Øsel, but was instead in St. Petersburg at the time of Robert's birth.] He was Secretary of the Russian delegation in London and Copenhagen from 1835–1863. He continued to garner awards and medals for his service and was eventually awarded the title of Privy Councilor in the Foreign Ministry in 1840. The title of Baron passed to Robert (being the oldest of the sons) when he became of age and he retained this appellation for the rest of his life.

### The Given Name(s) of Osten Sacken

There are various given names for Osten Sacken in the literature and this apparently stems from the confusion over his birth name (Baltic German) and his Russian name. From some nobility genealogies examined, I have been able to determine that he was born as Karl Robert Osten Sacken but used the Russian form (given name, patronymic, family name) of Robert Romanovich Osten Sacken [Роберт Романович Остен Сакен] since his father was working for the Russian government in St. Petersburg at the time of his birth. We can see how he referred to himself only in his diplomatic papers, personal correspondence, and published scientific writings; and it did indeed vary over the years. He used only Robert during his years while in the Russian diplomatic corps (1857–1871) and signed his letters using only “R” as the leading initial (see signature below). But in his first paper in 1854 and after his resignation from his consular duties in 1871, his scientific papers have him as “C.R. Osten Sacken”, the “C” for “Carl” and he signed his letters using “C.R.” in a completely different style than his earlier signatures (see example below of his signature in a letter to R. McLachlan in the 1880s using “C.R.”). There are rare instances of the use of “Charles” instead of “Carl” and this seems to have originated sometime after his resignation from his consular post in 1871 and subsequent travel to Europe: there is one handwritten listing of the ship manifest using the name “Charles O. Sacken” when he arrived in New York on 3 September 1873 to begin his study of North American Diptera at the Museum of Comparative Zoology<sup>1</sup> at Cambridge, Massachusetts and Verrall (1906) referred to him as “Charles”. His own use of “Carl” with a “C” instead of a “K” is curious. Other than the “K” found in published genealogies of the Osten Sacken family and a few biographies, the spelling is with a “C”. In any case, most of his contacts outside of his scientific studies referred to him only as “Baron Osten Sacken”, “Baron von Osten Sacken”, or “the Baron” without using a given name.

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, although then essentially unemployed, he gave his profession as “Physician” on the ship’s manifest.

### Early Life

Osten Sacken says in his autobiography that during a temporary residence with his mother Elizabeth Yegorovna Osten Sacken [née von Engelhardt] in Baden-Baden in 1838–1839 he met 14-year old Joseph Nikolaievich Schatiloff [Иосифа Николаевич Шатилов] (1824–1889) [later to become a well-known Russian zoologist (primarily ornithologist) and agriculturalist] who gave him his first instruction in collecting Coleoptera and thereby influenced his life-long interest in entomology. It was possibly also this teacher who later helped him memorize numbers by associating them with colors. In a letter to the researcher, Francis Galton, Osten Sacken explained his synesthetic ability of visualizing numbers as colors:

“The localisation of numerals, peculiar to certain persons, is foreign to me. In my mind’s eye the figures appear *in front* of me, within a limited space. My peculiarity, however, consists in the fact that the numerals from 1 to 9 are differently coloured; (1) black, (2) yellow, (3) pale brick red, (4) brown, (5) blackish gray, (6) reddish brown, (7) green, (8) bluish, (9) reddish brown, somewhat like 6. These colours appear very distinctly when I think of these figures separately; in compound figures they become less apparent. But the most remarkable manifestation of these colours appears in my recollections of chronology. When I think of the events of a given century they invariably appear to me on a background coloured like the principal figure in the dates of that century; thus events of the eighteenth century invariably appear to me on a greenish ground, from the colour of the figure 7. This habit clings to me most tenaciously, and the only hypothesis I can form about its origin is the following:—My tutor, when I was ten to twelve years old, taught me chronology by means of a diagram on which the centuries were represented by squares, subdivided in 100 smaller squares; the squares representing centuries had *narrow coloured borders*; it may be that in this way the recollection of certain figures became associated with certain colours. I venture this explanation without attaching too much importance to it, because it seems to me that if it was true, my *direct* recollection of those coloured borders would have been stronger than it is; still, the strong association of my chronology with colour seems to plead in favour of that explanation.” (Osten Sacken *in* Galton, 1883: 146)

What effect this synesthesia may have had on Osten Sacken’s memory is unknown but it could have helped his ability to conduct such rigorous and methodical research on his entomological research subjects with minimal errors.

### Diplomatic Years

There is little evidence as to what formal education Osten Sacken obtained in St. Petersburg after being tutored as a young child, although he alludes to it in his autobiography (1903: 2). At the age of 21, he entered the Imperial Foreign Service where his father worked and for the next seven years he was posted to various European cities (Tuckermann, 1910). Because his father was stationed in London and Copenhagen from 1835–1863, it is probable that he worked with his father in those cities at some point, which undoubtedly afforded him the time to meet with fellow entomologists and to visit the major collections there. However, Osten Sacken’s autobiography (1903) only indicated travel from 1852 to 1853 to visit colleagues and museums, when he went to cities in England and Germany where he met a number of colleagues, e.g., Westwood, Stainton, Walker and White in England (1852); and Klug, Humboldt and Ruthe in Berlin; Kiesenwetter in Dresden; Schiner, Brauer and Kolenati in Vienna; and Dohrn in Stettin (all in 1853).

Then, in 1856, he was sent to the United States as the Secretary to the Russian Legation in Washington, DC at the close of the presidency of Franklin Pierce. During his travel to the U.S. he visited more

colleagues: Hagen in Königsberg; Winnertz in Crefeld, Selys de Longchamps in Brussels and Wulp and Snellen van Vollenhoven in The Netherlands. He arrived in New York on 14 June on the Cunard steamship *Arabia* (traveling as “Baron Robt. Osten Sacken”) and after disembarking made his way to D.C. While in Washington, he resided for the first few years in modest quarters in the boarding house of a Mrs. Nicolson on the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 22nd Street (Saul, 1991: 251). Later he found better quarters at “246 K Street (North)”. Both places of residence were within walking distance of the Russian embassy at the corner of Constitution Avenue and G street.

Most of his time in Washington was spent assisting the *Chargé d’Affaires*, German-born Eduard Stoeckl, with various diplomatic duties (even taking over the role of *Chargé d’Affaires* for 9 months during 1858–1859 when Stoeckl was called back to Russia), but he also attended various celebrations and awards as a representative of the Russian delegation, e.g., he was in attendance in New York in September 1858 at the celebration to commemorate the completion of the Atlantic Telegraph Cable between North America and Europe.

He was involved in a few interesting international matters during his tenure in Washington: one involved acting as liaison between the U.S. and English and French authorities, the latter two who were protesting at the presence of a warship in the Bosphorus when the U.S. frigate USS *Wabash* was sighted near Istanbul (it was being sent to Turkey at their request to inspect the new design) (Galton, 1937: 31); and another was to identify insects collected during a survey of the fauna for a proposed canal to be built in Colombia to allow ships to pass more easily between the Atlantic and the Pacific<sup>2</sup> (Osten Sacken, 1861a, b).

A bit of the diplomatic business side of Osten Sacken can be seen in the description of him by historian Robert Allen:

“Carl Robert, Freiherr von Osten-Sacken (1828–1906) was one of that group of Baltic Germans who were so frequently found in the upper levels of the Russian administration where they served loyally, if at times somewhat pedantically, the emperors, whose own German backgrounds inclined them toward an acceptance of many Germanic attitudes. ... During all his residence in the United States he seems to have been chiefly interested not in the minutiae of diplomacy but in the description and classification of the diptera [sic], two-winged flies, of North America.” (Allen, 1988: 32).

Although posted to the U.S. in the diplomatic service, his fervor for dipterology was close to the forefront of his priorities when time permitted. Soon after he arrived in Washington, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian, Spencer Baird, and Osten Sacken made contact and arrangements were soon made for Osten Sacken to produce a catalogue of North American Diptera (Osten Sacken, 1858), the first such catalogue for Diptera of any zoogeographical realm. Osten Sacken would remain a close family friend of the Baird’s throughout his time in the U.S. (Dall, 1915). In 1857, less than a year later, he would finish the manuscript, but Baird had other activities planned for him.

Toward the end of 1857, not having had any response from Louis Agassiz on the subject of some Cuban turtles despite numerous letters requesting his services, Baird requested Osten Sacken to go to

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<sup>2</sup> This survey, from 1857 to 1860, was along a proposed route near the present border between Panama and Colombia, from the Gulf of Darien to the Pacific. At the time of the survey, the Isthmus of Panama was a province of Colombia (Clarke, 2009: 3).

Cuba to meet with Felipe Poey, head of the natural history museum in Havana at the time. Poey had been corresponding with Baird concerning turtles he wished to send to Washington. Allen (1988) noted the trip to Cuba but could not see any diplomatic reason for Osten Sacken to be traveling there. Galton's (1937: 22) list of letters between Osten Sacken and the Russian government at this time shows otherwise. The possible purchase and annexation of Cuba by the United States was being entertained by some members of the Pierce administration in the late 1850s, so Russia authorized Osten Sacken to travel there and investigate further. Osten Sacken obliged and took the opportunity to collect during the three-month sojourn.

Osten Sacken was a prolific letter writer with a large network of correspondents and there is no doubt much to be gained by reading through all the letters he wrote to numerous colleagues. His advice on matters entomological was sought by many while he was in Washington. For example, one of his early letters after arriving in the U.S. was to Samuel H. Scudder on 17 January 1859 in which he gave advice on the Thaddeus W. Harris Collection stating that it should be kept "sacred" without changing the arrangement, because it contained some of the few original types of Thomas Say (most of Say's types had been destroyed through shipping and insect pests before Harris saw the donated material) (Sorensen, 1995: 39).

Having a new scientist in Washington (and with a title of "Baron") was a good excuse for those in high society and high scientific circles to invite him to dinners and other functions. One of the first social clubs he joined was the so-called Potomac Naturalist's Club (an informal precedent of the more formal Potomac-Side Naturalist's Club, which was in turn the forerunner of the Washington Academy of Sciences), members of which were scientists residing in Washington or those there who had an interest in natural history. They initially got together informally for dinner at members' homes every fortnight, most often Baird's. Nine members (including naturalists Titan Peale and Robert Kennicott; see Table 1) founded the club in 1858 and Osten Sacken joined soon after. It was during this time that one of its members, Secretary of the Treasury Lucius E. Chittenden, remembered Osten Sacken in his memoirs:

"Yet I cannot wholly pass over Baron Osten-Sacken, of the Russian Legation. The *Diptera*, or Cuvier's twelfth order of insects, was his *forte*. Very learned was he too, and, if I am not mistaken, his monograph on the *Diptera*, a large quarto, was printed by the Smithsonian as one of its contributions to science. He was a genial, kind-hearted, unassuming student of nature. The club had not a more popular member; but owing to his diminutive size, he acquired a name which clung to him ever afterwards.

"Pray what are the *Diptera*?" asked a member, whose studies had not been entomological, of another member, when Osten-Sacken was mentioned.

"*Diptera*? Well, I suppose a *Culex* belongs to the *Diptera*."

"What is a *Culex* then?" pursued his questioner.

"A *Culex*!" was the reply. A *Culex* is an insect with a double pair of wings, abounding in moist localities, which, thirsting for human gore, invades the habitations of man with an irritating buzzing sound, pierces the cuticle with his lancet-shaped proboscis, and discharges into the wound a poisonous fluid."

"Confound the man! He means a mosquito!" exclaimed the irreverent auditor.

"Osten-Sacken would naturally write about the species. Don't you see the resemblance?"

This was sufficient to fasten an undeserved nick-name upon the good-natured little entomologist." (Chittenden, 1891: 242–243).

**Table 1. Founding Members of the Potomac Club in 1858**

Cooper, James Graham (1830–1902)  
 Foreman, Edward [Patent Office employee]  
 Hayden, Ferdinand Vandever (1829–1887)\*  
 Kennicott, Robert (1835–1866)\*  
 Peale, Titian Ramsay (1799–1885)  
 Schaeffer, George Christian (1815–1873)  
 Smithsonian Institution [i.e., Spencer Baird and Joseph Henry]  
 Stimpson, William (1832–1872)\*

\*also members of the short-lived but concurrent Megatherium Club<sup>3</sup>

Most entomologists probably envision Osten Sacken as a rather large and robust man. However, an early photograph of him seated next to a table and leaning slightly forward, taken around 1860 while he was in Washington as Secretary of the Russian delegation, shows a very thin young man. But only when knowing the probable height of the table next to the chair on which he was seated and extrapolating can it be calculated that he was probably between 5 feet and 5 feet 2 inches tall (ca. 15 dm), corroborating Chittenden's (1891) back-handed compliment of a "good-natured little entomologist".

President Pierce's term of office came to a close in March 1861 whereupon a new President was elected and Osten Sacken was there at the inaugural reception to meet the new man in charge, Abraham Lincoln. He reflected on the President when interviewed at his home in retirement in Heidelberg years later:

"Soon after his inauguration, Mr. Lincoln, as is the custom, received the Diplomatic Corps. Many of the members of that body, expecting to find him awkward and ill at ease, indeed wholly lacking in *savoir-faire*, were anticipating an amusing occasion rather than one full of dignity. But they were disappointed.

Mr. Lincoln played at this difficult *rôle* as though to the manner born. As each Minister in turn was presented, he greeted him graciously and in words most fitting, seldom if ever repeating himself. Baron Osten-Sacken witnessed it all, and we have his testimony that Lincoln was *perfectly* at ease.



<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, apparently this was a more irreverent club, many of whose members lived in the Smithsonian "Castle" but were eventually kicked out for conducting sack races in the Castle's halls and serenading Smithsonian Secretary Joseph Henry's daughter (Roberts & Schmidt, 2012: 105).

On leaving the White house, the Russian Minister asked the Secretary what he thought of the new President? He replied, "I think he is a *great* man."

During the fifteen years of his official life and residence here [in the U.S.], from 1856 to 1871, Baron Osten-Sacken had exceptional opportunities for observing the leading men both in Congress and in the Cabinet, but especially Seward and Lincoln. He had also known or seen most of the leading public men of his time in Europe." (Tuckermann, 1910: 85–86).

Lincoln's desire for emancipation of the slaves was something of which Osten Sacken was also an advocate, and he delivered to a New York Times correspondent a copy of Tsar Alexander II's policy on emancipating serfs in Russia entitled *Études sur la question de l'abolition du servage en Russie, par un contemporain* (Everett, 1861) to help with the article that told of Russian sympathies to the problem in the United States.

Osten Sacken was not in Washington for much longer, though. The unfortunate death of the Russian Consul General in New York City, Jean de Nottbeck (another German-born Russian diplomat), when his horse ran wild in the streets near Central Park and threw him, led to Osten Sacken replacing him in June 1861. Interestingly, his residence while in New York City was at 52 Exchange Place, the Wall Street area today.

Osten Sacken's New York duties as Consul General and activities in that position were just as varied and interesting as in Washington. One of the major functions during his posting was hosting a grand reception of the Russian naval fleet in New York City in October 1863. He mingled with the dignitaries not only of the New York's mayor's office but those from across the country and internationally. Tours of the vessels for politicians and those of high social station took place and various dinners and galas were given to honor the Russian admiralty and its fleet. All activities were reported in numerous papers across the country, e.g., the *Sacramento Daily Union* not only described in detail the major dinner and who was seated next to whom, but also mentioned a quote from Osten Sacken concerning, of all things, not the naval fleet, but the progress of communication and the invention of the telegraph: "When the telegraph was invented, man was to a certain extent, re-created; his position on Earth was new!" (Anonymous, 1863).

Other highlights of his New York diplomatic service included being one of the few of his fellow diplomats arguing to his Russian superiors back home against the sale of Alaska to the U.S. and pointing out the value of mining and natural resources there (Gerus, 1973: 173–175); and innocently inviting the services of a Russian Orthodox priest, Father Agapius Honcharenko, to give the first Greek Orthodox mass in New York (at Trinity Church), and also hiring the priest to help him learn Greek. Knowledge of the priest being in New York and with Osten Sacken upset Russian authorities greatly (Osten Sacken was unaware of the criminal charges against the fugitive Honcharenko, who eventually managed to elude authorities and ended up in California).

In mid-April 1865, upon hearing the news of the assassination of President Lincoln, Osten Sacken abandoned plans to hold his annual dinner party and ball in celebration of Tsar Alexander II's birthday on 29 April. Instead, he and his staff respectfully honored the memory of the late President by wearing black armbands for 30 days of mourning. Osten Sacken was said to be one of the first to pay a visit to authorities to express personal condolences of his passing (Anonymous, 1865).

On the "personal" social side, in New York City as in Washington, Osten Sacken was the prize of society at the houses of Union generals, scientists, artists, and writers. He himself claimed he had dining invitations to over 100 houses (Osten Sacken, 1903). In the published diaries of some of those

whose houses he visited we see the social Osten Sacken. For example, Osten Sacken was impressed with America, how it had grown so fast and had become a leading country in the world in such a short amount of time.

“Osten Sacken was an enthusiastic supporter of the ‘American experiment.’ ‘He wants a book to be written upon America, showing how remarkable growth is produced, how towns are formed from settlements, etc.; in fact, the whole organism!’ He asked Dr. Lieber, but he [Lieber] said that the difficulty would be that no European could be made to believe that an American was born with all this organism in him and developed it as naturally as he breathed.” (Daly, 1962: xxxiii).

Russia was on the side of the U.S. government during the years of the Civil War, yet the *Chargé d’Affaires* in Washington, Eduard Stoeckl was told by his Russian superiors to be “amiable to all sides”. Osten Sacken was sympathetic to the discussions about the ending of slavery at the dinners in the homes of the Unionists but was careful to claim neutrality on difficult subjects whenever possible, always being the diplomat. In diplomatic papers from and too Russia, a different tone was heard. The diplomatic staff in Washington thought Lincoln a weak leader and Seward not very intelligent, but they still hoped for a Union victory (Golder, 1937).

On the scientific “social” side, Osten Sacken had numerous and varied memberships and associations with scientific societies and academia in the New York City area, including the American Geographical Society and his listing as an Associate Member of the School of Mines at Columbia College from 1869–1870. Additionally, he was instrumental in assisting with the formation of the entomology collection at the new American Museum of Natural History. He was listed in their first Annual Report as donating “more than four thousand specimens of beetles, and insects of other orders” (Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History, 1870: 7), which were initially stored in the offices of a Wall Street banking firm because storage for them at the Museum had not yet been built.

### **The End of His Diplomatic Service**

In early 1871, Osten Sacken resigned his service as Consul General but, in keeping his diplomatic obligations for another year, headed to Europe for diplomatic, entomological, and family business. On 5 August 1871 he sailed for Europe and first went to his mother’s home in Baden Baden (his father passed away in 1864 in St. Petersburg but he was unable to attend services). In early November he traveled to Guben, Germany, to visit Loew and was in St. Petersburg from 10 November to the end of December. On the 1st of January 1872 he arrived in Berlin for diplomatic business and then went back to Baden Baden and traveled on to Paris before returning to the U.S. in early February.

The next few months he attended various society meetings in New York City and dinner functions before finally officially ending his diplomatic service, packing up everything, and sailing back to Germany on 11 July.

He spent the remainder of 1872 and early 1873 visiting museums throughout Europe and spent a great deal of time in Italy, where he is first noted in the published letters of the southern U.S. artist Caroline Carson [more on this later]. Apparently his mother joined him for a part of this Italy trip; she passed away in Naples on 11 February 1873.

### **Second Phase of Work in the United States**

Osten Sacken traveled back to the U.S. in 1873 (arriving in New York on 3 September) and settled in Cambridge at the Museum of Comparative Zoology to finish the fourth and last part of the

*Monographs of North American Diptera* (this one by Loew, the manuscript of which he probably had picked up on his visit to Loew in Guben), to complete the second edition of the North American Diptera catalog (Osten Sacken, 1878), write his two-part *Prodrome* on the Tabanidae, and to make final arrangements for the acquisition of the Loew Collection. While in Cambridge, he was able to divide his time between daytime taxonomic pursuits and evening social events. He was a member of the “Club”, a dinner club of scientists and high society in Boston (Morse, 1929: 63); he met poet Ralph Waldo Emerson (Rusk & Tilton, 1939: 291), and on 9 January 1874 he became a founding member of the Cambridge Entomological Club.

Having finished many of the manuscripts he had planned to work on, on 27 November 1875 Osten Sacken traveled to the West Coast to begin an almost year-long collecting trip in California and environs, arriving in San Francisco on 20 December, almost one month after the cross-country trip from New York. After collecting on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay on 11 January he quickly made his way down to the Santa Barbara area where he made his first collections in southern California on 25 January 1876. He remained in southern California collecting for the next couple of months before returning northward on 16 March. He collected in the Bay area, the Sierra Nevada, and especially Yosemite until early July when he began the trip back to Boston, collecting along the way in Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming. In August he stopped at Rock Island, Illinois to visit the grave of fellow entomologist Benjamin Walsh, a frequent correspondent of his, who had passed away from sunstroke (Evenhuis, 2013) while Osten Sacken was in California. He finally got back to Boston in September 1876 and began work on his *Western Diptera* paper (Osten Sacken, 1877), the results of which could then be added to the second edition of the catalogue.

### **Life in “Retirement”**

Osten Sacken finally left the United States for good in June of 1877, at the age of 49. Although he was no longer employed by anyone, the remainder of his life could not really be called retirement as he was just as prolific, if not more, in his scientific publishing.

“In the years which followed [after 1877] and which constituted the third period of his entomological career, Baron Osten Sacken published numerous critical papers on Diptera, and increased the number of his published writings from 53 to 179.” (Bryan, 1906: 181)

That he was prolific was also combined with a confession that perhaps he bit off more than he could chew with his scientific work as described by writer Thomas Higginson, whom he met while in Rhode Island collecting insects:

“He was a most agreeable man, who always complained that he had made a fatal mistake in his career, through rashly taking the whole of *Diptera*, or two-winged insects, for his scientific task; whereas to take charge of a single genus would have been enough, he thought, for the life-work of a judicious man. Personally he should have selected the mosquito.” (Higginson & Boynton, 1902: 276).

In addition to his specialty of Diptera taxonomy and classification, Osten Sacken had varied interests throughout his life. Some of these were pointed out by his life-long friend, physicist George Hartley Bryan in Bryan’s (1906) obituary where he remembered Osten Sacken having an avid interest in every aspect of mathematics, especially historical points, posing a question relating to the conchoid of Nicomedes [no publication on this question could be found during this study] and having a collection of photographs of paintings of the great masters, all arranged systematically in much the same way he

would classify his collection of Diptera<sup>4</sup>. Apparently his noble heritage, which no doubt provided him with independent means, allowed him to sustain himself without employment and to travel frequently throughout Europe.

Upon disembarking from his voyage to Europe from the U.S. in the summer of 1877, his first destination was Guben, where he met up with Loew to arrange for the Loew Collection of American Diptera (containing many specimens collected by Osten Sacken and sent to Loew for his identification and description) to be transferred to the Museum of Comparative Zoology. Thousands of specimens [1,300 types and about 1,600 other species (Smith, 1978)] were involved in the transaction.

Next was to choose a place of residence. Osten Sacken had at one time entertained the possibility of London, but ended up choosing Heidelberg, where he lived the rest of his life, changing homes only once while remaining near the city center.

Now well ensconced in a fairly central location in western Europe, he could easily visit museums, colleagues, and travel for leisure. The last included frequent visits to Italy. Some, like his travel there in 1872–1873, were to visit museums and entomological colleagues, but others were apparently purely for pleasure. Apparently at some point he made the acquaintance of the South Carolinian painter Caroline Carson, a Unionist who left the south and her father's hopes of her becoming a plantation mistress and moved to New York City at the start of the Civil War to paint. After a few years there, she decided to seek out a new life and moved to Italy, where the now widowed Mrs. Carson lived the rest of her life. It is not clear when the two met, whether while she was living in New York and attending high society social events where the Russian Consul General would naturally be, or when both were in Naples at the time Osten Sacken's mother passed away. Either he was smitten by her or she fantasized it. At least one of her letters mentioning him (Pease & Pease, 2003) implies as much.

[August 5, 1883, Hotel Allee Saal, Langen Schwalbach]

“Baron Osten Sacken came 7 hours journey from Heidelberg to see me, he stopped two days & went on to visit at Ems another friend, so as to not make it too particular coming to see me!”  
(Pease & Pease, 2003: 152).

To put this “relationship” in context, at the time of her first entries mentioning Osten Sacken making social visits in 1872, she was 52 and Osten Sacken was 44. At the time of this 1883 letter when she took a brief trip to the health resort at Bad Langenschwalbach in Hesse, Germany she was now a ripe 63 and he was still a rather spry 55. Mrs. Carson died in 1892 and Osten Sacken never made mention of her in any of his known publications or correspondence.

In between his travels, Osten Sacken also hosted visiting scientists of all disciplines at his home in Heidelberg, sometimes taking walks with them in the nearby hills. Having maintained such a large network of correspondents and communicating the results of his research through numerous scientific papers in many journals, he was extremely well-known and well respected for his generous nature in assisting and advising whenever possible. Osten Sacken's reputation as a leader in the field of entomology and his international renown for his scientific achievements were recognized in 1886 when the Universitas Ruperto-Carolina (Heidelberg) conferred upon him the degree of “Ehrendoktor”

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4 Biographers (Verrall 1906; Smith 1978) could not find any evidence of where these photographs may have ended up. Research conducted in this study found a notation in the *Literarisches Zentralblatt von Deutschland* that stated that his beetle collection and “wertvolle Kunstsammlung” were passed to the Universitas Ruperto-Carolina (Heidelberg) (Anonymous, 1906: 21). This “Kunstsammlung” is no doubt his photograph collection of the major works of art.

[= Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy]. Six years later, he had the unique distinction of being the only entomologist to ever have had a minor planet (the asteroid Roberta) discovered and named after him, which was done by Anton Staus of Heidelberg in 1892. This was in thanks for Osten Sacken having brought back from the U.S. for Staus a 3-inch refractor (Schmadel, 2012: 41).

He continued to publish [his last paper (Osten Sacken, 1905) was on the drone fly] and to attend various scientific meetings, and spent the later years compiling his autobiographical “*Record of My Life Work*”, which was published in parts. A facsimile edition of all three parts was published in 1978 by E.W. Classey, with Kenneth G.V. Smith providing an introduction (Smith, 1978) that contained much additional biographical material. Osten Sacken ended Part Three of his original autobiography (1904: 240) with the oft-quoted lines “This my ‘Record’ of half a century (1854–1904) of entomological work I now conclude, at the age of seventy-six, in good health, and with unimpaired eyesight.” He died 2 years later in Heidelberg, at the age of 77, three months shy of his 78th birthday.

I conclude with a quote from the obituary by Verrall (1906), which sums up many of the qualities of this man and, now knowing his synesthetic ability, may explain his retentive memory for minutiae that Verrall mentioned:

“Probably no entomologist was ever more ‘thorough’ in his work, and his bibliographical collection on Dipterology was unrivalled, and his was not merely a Library but notes were made by him from every work, so that he practically never missed a record of what had been previously written ... . Absolute master of almost every European language; possessor of adequate means to associate in any company; of noble birth, which would give him admission to any rank of society; of diplomatic training which produced the most polished manners; all these qualities combined with an exceedingly retentive memory which he helped by detailed notes and exact observations, produced such a Master of Dipterology as we shall probably never see again.” (Verrall, 1906: 234–235).

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